
Coastlines

The Translation of Family, A Sestina

by Jonathan Rivera

I set out to write a villanelle, in English
but the rhyming is too overt. Spanish
is a much more beautiful language to rhyme in, my
father's
because there rhyming between words
comes subtle yet connected like brothers
or sisters, strong bonds cemented in history.

But with the pull of history
much gets dredged from the depths that English
can distort, even the bonds between brothers,
so I grasp to use a forgotten rudimentary Spanish,
fumbling to rekindle ashen words,
to connect with my father.

With dark and distant eyes my father
communicates that I cannot comprehend his story
that my love and study for words
in a foreign tongue, English
has stifled any mastery of the beautiful Spanish
I once shared with him and my brother.

I show my work to my brother
Grimly he sighs *take it easier on father*.
More than the intricacy of rhyme the Spanish
language loses something meaningful to history
when it is translated and overtaken by English
much like the way I lost my love for the Word.

In the beginning was the Word

and the word was love like that of a brother,
love the kind even English
could not strip away beauty from, regardless what my
father
thinks. I tell him I will write his story,
our story, with beauty and eloquence as is capable in
the Spanish

verses of so long ago. So begins my fervent study of
Spanish
to reclaim my inheritance, power with words,
which can rightfully cram the immensity of history
into sentences so concise they are like brothers
so beautiful that not even my father
could deny the power of the English

language. To show how when using English
preciseness courses through like blood in history, like
the paint my brother
spills, conjuring with brushstrokes instead of words
like our father.